Improve turkey performance by improving environment and water quality

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Producers can achieve better turkey performance by making improvements in the birds' immediate environment and the quality of water they drink. Profitable turkey rearing is dependent on dry, friable litter with ammonia-free air. This is combined with a watering vessel that is more hygienic than conventional open watering systems.

When enclosed watering systems began achieving better results in broiler flocks, turkey farmers asked if that technology could apply to their situation.

However, research revealed that turkeys and chickens drink in very different ways. Chickens from Day One peck at a nipple-type drinker to activate it. Most day-old turkey poults can drink effectively from a nipple-type drinker, but within 10 days, their eye-to-beak coordination begins to fail. Many poults simply cannot connect properly with the drinker trigger pin. The older the poult, the more pronounced the problem, resulting in poor overall performance.

Turkeys, in general, need a drinker that presents a larger target to compensate for their poor eye-to-beak coordination. But, the drinker should retain as many of the inherent advantages associated with an enclosed system as possible to provide the more hygienic environment.

Activator systems that combine protected water delivery systems with activator trays have proven effective in turkey poult production. The small tray attaches to the end of the trigger pin. The poults drink the small reserve of water that is

present in the activator tray; and while doing so, their necks push the activator to the side. This replenishes the water in the tray.

Such a system exposes only small amounts of water to the poultry house environment and that water changes frequently. This keeps the bacterial load to a minimum. The birds have less opportunity to share water, reducing the threat of disease spreading from bird to bird.

While general production improvements have been made using a semi-enclosed activator system for poults, it was generally assumed that turkeys beyond the poult stage required an open watering system for maximum weight gain. The idea was that the semi-enclosed system provided the poults with the healthy start they needed to overcome the less hygienic conditions caused by a totally open system in the final grow out phase.

Ziggity changed that with the introduction of its T-Max™ drinker for adult turkeys. Ziggity took the same proven concept that made it number one in poult watering and re-engineered it to work for older male and female turkeys. Ziggity has field-tested and fine-tuned the T-Max for more than three years.

Besides a healthier environment in the poultry house, turkey farmers also can reduce costs with an enclosed system. An activator system reduces water spillage, which decreases ammonia release. Producers need not add litter as often, and they need less ventilation to dry the existing litter or to remove ammonia. Growers also experience cost savings because the healthier environment decreases the need for medications.

By growing flocks with the T-Max system, producers can ensure a more hygienic environment and healthier birds throughout the entire turkey production process. That can translate into better profits.